

## Commentary by The Holy Biscuit

In en\_counter, we are invited to explore the hidden and unseen; the lost and the found; the familiar and the obscure; the personal and the communal. In these intricate maps, videos and installations, we are confronted with comments and critiques of how we view our city and our community. We are invited to enter into a dialogue with the participants of en\_counter and to ask how the city might be viewed by people in our communities who often don't have a say in how the city is portrayed and how it is talked about, as well as adding our own voices and experiences to create new maps during the exhibition. Whether from the perspective of homeless people, students, young people or skateboarders we are invited to ask questions of the place we are a part of and how we can build a future together.

Over the past year, The Holy Biscuit has been exploring its values as an organisation in an urban environment. We've considered what it might mean to be a community which is committed to hospitality and open to all. We've explored the tensions of fragility, incompleteness and contradiction and the possibility of hope, truth and faith in an often fractured and unjust world.

In this exhibition we see truth and faith being explored through the process of mapping our physical and emotional geographies. In the work we are invited to go on a journey with the participants to explore their personal stories, experiences and circumstances. We are also reminded of our own internal maps and our sense of self and of our self in relation to others and perhaps to God.

In these maps there is also a sense that we are all on a journey. We are all seeking out some kind of purpose and looking for direction and guidance about how we might (or might not) live our lives. In recent years, we have seen a resurgence of pilgrimage in society as people seek to journey to places which have gained emotional or spiritual importance either for them personally or for their communities. Pilgrimage is about remembering what has come before and seeking to be transformed by that remembrance in the present and for the future.

What might it mean to be on pilgrimage in your own city? How might we retrace the steps of others and seek significance in their stories and journeys? What do we miss when we are going about our daily life? How do we mark sights and moments of loss and celebration? And how might we do these things together with others - discovering (or rediscovering) who we are and who we'd like to be?

This exhibition also raises questions of what we might put our faith in. Should we place all of our faith and trust in the city branders and town planners and their version of Newcastle? Should we trust Google to be the source of all our knowledge? Or should we seek to put our faith in something else, something more substantial? Moreover, should we seek out alternatives, interpretations and stories, perhaps ones which have been sidelined, ignored or discarded by society? In Liberation Theology, a movement which originated in Latin America in the 1950s, there was a move to read and interpret the Bible and Jesus' teachings from the perspective and lived experience of the poor and marginalised and to critique the structures of power in society from below rather than from above.

It was a move, mainly by priests, to build communities where every person might be able to live with dignity, to be agents of their own destiny and as Jesus said, "to have life in all its fullness".

This exhibition is an invitation to encounter our city in a new way; to perceive it through the eyes of others, who may not usually be given the platform to influence how we view our environment or experience our communal spaces. We hope this stimulates questions and reflections on your own experience of the city and of the accepted public narratives around our perceptions of space and meaning and power.

### Take part with games and participatory mappings in the Activities Room

"NewcastleGateshead?" by Ben Jones, pupils of Walker Technology College and The Late Shows visitors...

You are invited to reflect on the tensions and misconceptions that colour the views we have of each other on either side of the Tyne...

"Secrets" by The Late Shows visitors...

Share a secret about a part of the city and then tweet what others have written. Let's reveal a hidden city!

"Heat Map"

The Holy Biscuit would like to know where you find faith, solace, memory and pilgrimage in the city...

"Dungeons and Shopping Malls" by Mike Jeffries

A mysterious map beckons you, irresistibly, to a vast entrance. Somewhere in this cavernous temple are clothes, food, fancy goods and tech. But dare you go in? All you ever wanted is here but beware the monsters: "Customer announcement, undead ahead." What are you waiting for, you've got the map....

...and back by popular demand, the "Toon Nights" board game also returns to The Holy Biscuit....

### What next?

Juice Festival 2016

For the 2016 Juice Festival in October we're planning to produce an atlas of maps about, for and by young people. It will form part of a young person's manifesto for the city, a series of statements on how people under 24 understand NewcastleGateshead.

Getting Involved and More Information

If you want to get involved there are a number of ways you can do so. First check out our blog for more details of what we've been up to:

<https://accidentalyouthclub.wordpress.com/juice/>

If you want to be sent details of the resources packs, email [jon.swords@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:jon.swords@northumbria.ac.uk) and we'll keep you updated.

We have secured funding from Northumbria University's Widening Participation fund to pay for artists to run mapping workshops in schools. For more details and eligibility criteria please contact [sebastian.messer@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:sebastian.messer@northumbria.ac.uk)

# en\_counter

The Holy Biscuit Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne

NewcastleGateshead Late Shows 7 PM - 11 PM, 13th & 14th May 2016  
Open 11 AM - 4 PM Tue. to Sat. 17th May - 2nd June 2016



Produced and curated by Mike Jeffries, Sebastian Messer and Jon Swords  
Departments of Geography, and Architecture and Built Environment, Northumbria University

en\_counter is an exhibition of mapping and related artwork which provides insights into NewcastleGateshead's geographies. It forms part of a two year research project, supported by Juice Festival, examining how young people understand the city, their place in it, and their vision for the future.

The academic team have collaborated with artists Christine Egan-Fowler, Ben Jones, Jessica Dolby and Adam Goodwin to provide mapping workshops in schools and youth groups. The maps from these workshops reveal hidden worlds and perspectives on the city, and have prompted the artistic responses which form this exhibition.





1. Nikki Whittle (2016) *cARTography* (opposite)

This piece places *en\_counter* in the wider context of recent exhibitions using maps as their theme. As you can see maps are highly adaptable objects, becoming tools for political statements, materials for clothing, and expressions of the self.

- ## 2. Jon Swords (2016) *River Map*

As part of the mapping project artist Ben Jones asked year eights at Walker Technology College to colour code maps of NewcastleGateshead according to how they felt about different places. Reviewing the maps revealed nearly 80% had coloured in the River Tyne signifying its importance in their lives. Stitching together extracts from the original maps, this meta-river attempts to represent the importance of the Tyne in the children's geographical imaginations through scale and repetition.

- ### 3. Lovely Jojo (2014) *Spaces of Homelessness*

Produced for the ESRC Festival of Social Science 2014: "Imaging Homelessness in a City of Care", Lovely Jojo's map brings together the life-histories of 30 homeless people who participated in a project led by Adele Irving and Oliver Moss in the Department of Social Sciences and Languages at Northumbria University. The work seeks to highlight the spaces, places and experiences of homelessness and to give a greater voice to the homeless population, still largely marginalised from mainstream decision-making processes.

- #### 4. Oliver Moss and Adele Irving (2015) *Sounding Off*

*Sounding Off* is an interactive sound-walk curated by Oliver Moss and Adele Irving. The aim of the sound-walk is to promote a more nuanced understanding of homelessness by gaining an insight in to these individuals' pathways into – and, in some cases, out of – homelessness, as well as their experiences and concerns as homeless people. With the support of sound artist Rachael Hales the participants read their testimonies, which are blended and spliced with field recordings. These can be accessed using a QR code reader on your mobile phone.

5. Space2 & produced by Nelly Stavropoulou (2015) *It's About Time*

*It's About Time* is the result of a community film-making workshop with a group of fifteen young people from Space2, enabling them to present their lives in NewcastleGateshead. The project was developed and delivered by Nelly Stavropoulou, Director of art and media charity, Bridge + Tunnel Voices.

Space2 was created by NE1 and run by the YMCA to support 13-18 year olds to find employment through coaching, experience and developing contacts.

Nelly Stavropoulou is a Leverhulme Trust PhD doctoral student at the School of Applied Social Sciences in Durham University investigating the role of community arts in promoting representation, self-expression and democratic participation for young refugees.

- ## 6. Space2 with Mike Jeffries (2016) *World Map*

The Space2 *world map* shows the connections of family and friends across the continents by Space2 clients on a typical afternoon united by one space in Newcastle.

7. The pupils of the Royal Grammar School with Christine Egan-Fowler (2015) *Maps of Gold*

Made during a week of mapping workshops, the pupils of the Royal Grammar School students were asked to identify locations in NewcastleGateshead that were 'precious' to them. These areas were cut from the NewcastleGateshead "Walk" map and the journeys or places redacted with gold leaf simultaneously highlighting and obscuring them from view.

8. Euan Lynn (2015) *Drawing*

Skate-boarders rub wax onto the surfaces and edges of objects to make the surface slick enough to slide over. The residual wax leaves evidence of the hidden amenity in the object - the alternative functions - of this kerb, this bench, or that handrail, which can be read by other skater-boarders. Lynn encourages the participants to use the wax to highlight aspects of their environment they perceive as having alternative, potential use-values. By drawing attention to the unconscious markings left by skateboarders, participants gain a different understanding of the objects and materials by which we are surrounded.

9. Dad? with Paul Summers (2015-16) *Skate Culture*

Dad? are a group of skateboarders from Newcastle upon Tyne who have been working with poet Paul Summers. They are writing skate-culture poems, designing images, taking photos and making films which will culminate in a skate-culture exhibition at the Tyneside Cinema in June 2016. The project is part of New Writing North's Young Writers' City programme funded by Newcastle Culture Investment Fund.

10. Mike Jeffries (2016) *Studentville*

The studentville map is compiled from 27 individual maps made by final year geography students at Northumbria University. It captures the intense buzz of student life, swirling around the black hole of the library. The students' experiences of Newcastle are intense but partial, whole neighbourhoods extensively colonised, explored on lost walks home, or never visited. The clichés of student life hide a much more personal, everyday world of suddenly needing milk, romantic dates and feeding pet snakes.

11. Mike Jeffries (2016) *The Outskirts of Newcastle*

This work explores where the city ends in a hinterland of lay-bys, out of town outlets and new build. The promise of bright futures carves out new territory, enclaves reclaiming the countryside from the unfamiliar and dangerous. There is no signal. Newcastle has barely begun to expand from the citadel hunkered down along the Tyne but between the great wastes of the uplands and the city's control lies a wilderness ready to be conquered. This map records the limits of our knowledge, handing on the baton to future generations.

12. Jon Swords and Bruce Carlisle (2016) *Topological Road Map*

Using road data for Newcastle upon Tyne, Swords and Carlisle have created a new kind of map. Instead of mapping roads geospatially, they have mapped them topologically so the connections are maintained but locations are free to be manipulated. The roads that share connections have been pulled together and those that don't have been pushed apart. Suburbs and coherent urban areas are grouped together and located in relation to one another. At first glance the map is discombobulating as time and space have been distorted. However, once you study it the places become recognisable as Newcastle.

## Acknowledgments and Thanks

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